

IMAGES OF THE BYZANTINE WORLD

VISIONS, MESSAGES AND MEANINGS
STUDIES PRESENTED TO LESLIE BRUBAKER



EDITED BY
ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU

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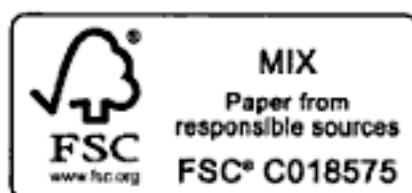
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List of Abbreviations

<i>ArtB</i>	<i>Art Bulletin</i>
<i>ArtH</i>	<i>Art History</i>
<i>BM</i>	<i>The Burlington Magazine</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CahArc</i>	<i>Cahiers Archéologiques</i>
<i>CPG</i>	M. Geerard (ed.), <i>Clavis Patrum Graecorum</i> (6 vols, Turnhout, 1974–2003)
<i>DChAE</i>	<i>Deltion tes Christianikes Archaialogikes Hetaireias</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>GBA</i>	<i>Gazette des Beaux-Arts</i>
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>JWCI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> (8 vols, Indices and Supplementum, Zurich, Munich, Düsseldorf, 1981–2009)
<i>ODB</i>	A.P. Kazdan (ed.), <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> (3 vols, New York and Oxford, 1991)
<i>PLP</i>	H. Hunger (ed.), <i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> (12 vols, Vienna, 1976–95; supplements [Appendices 1 and 2], 2001)
<i>PG</i>	J.P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae Graecae: Patrologiae Cursus Completus</i> (161 vols, Paris, 1857–66)
<i>RBK</i>	K. Wessel and M. Restle (eds), <i>Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst</i> (5 vols, Stuttgart, 1966–95)
<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>

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Leslie Brubaker: Biography and Published Works

Kallirroë Linardou

Biography

Leslie Brubaker was educated at the Pennsylvania State University, USA, from where she obtained first a BA in 1972 and then an MA in 1976. In 1983, she had successfully completed her Ph.D. thesis at Johns Hopkins University, while simultaneously she was employed as an instructor at the Department of Art, Wheaton College, USA (1981/83).

For nearly thirty years, Leslie Brubaker has undertaken uninterrupted teaching work both in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. She served as an Assistant and Associate Professor at the Department of Art, Wheaton College, USA, between 1983/90 and 1990/93 respectively, while between 1993/94 she served as Chair at the same college. In 1994, she moved to the United Kingdom, where she continued her teaching career at the University of Birmingham to the present day. She started as a Lecturer in Byzantine studies (1994/96), became a Senior Lecturer in Byzantine Studies (1996/2001), continued as a Reader in Byzantine Art History (2001/2006), and in 2005 she was appointed a Professor of Byzantine Art History. Between 2003 and 2009, she served as Director of the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies of the same University, and from 2005 to 2009 as Assistant Director (Research) of the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity at the University of Birmingham. She is currently serving as Director of the Graduate School of the College of Art and Law there.

Her main field of expertise is Byzantine illustrated manuscripts, with further research interests extending into visual narrative, gender studies, female patronage, Iconoclasm and the cult of icons. Finally, her interest into icons, relics and the proliferation of the cult of the Virgin Mary in Byzantium developed into a major research project subsidized by a AHRC grant.

- 'Sex, Lies and Textuality: The *Secret History* of Prokopios and the Rhetoric of Gender in Sixth-Century Byzantium' in L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World, East and West, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 83–101.
- 'Aniconic Decoration in the Christian World, 6th–11th Century', *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* LI (2004), pp. 573–90.
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- 'Sta Maria Antiqua and the History of Byzantine Art History', in J. Osborne (ed.), *Sta Maria Antiqua, 100 years on* (Rome, 2004), pp. 41–7.
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- 'The Vatican Christian Topography', in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilisation: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 3–24.
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- Eat, Drink and Be Merry (Luke 12:19) – Food and Wine in Byzantium*, Papers of the 37th Annual Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, in Honour of Professor A.A.M. Bryer (Ashgate, 2007) (ed. with K. Linardou).
- 'Every Cliché in the Book: The Linguistic Turn and the Text-Image Discourse in Byzantine Manuscripts', in L. James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 58–82.
- 'Byzantine Veneration of the Theotokos: Icons, Relics and Eighth-Century Homilies', with M. Cunningham, in H. Amirav and B. Romeny (eds), *Papers in Honour of Averil Cameron* (Peeters, Leuven, 2007), pp. 235–50.
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- 'Representation ca 800: Arab, Byzantine, Carolingian', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 ser. 19 (2009), pp. 37–55.
- 'Image, Meta-text and text in Byzantium', in S. Sato (ed.), *Herméneutique du texte d'histoire: orientation, interprétation et questions nouvelles* (Tokyo, 2009), pp. 93–100.
- 'Eighth-century Iconoclasms', in J. D. Alchermes (ed.), *ANAΘHMATA EOPTIKA, Festschrift for Thomas Mathews* (Mainz, 2009), pp. 73–81.
- 'Gesture in Byzantium', in M. J. Braddick (ed.), *The Politics of Gesture, Past and Present Supplement 4* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 36–56.
- 'Gifts and Prayers. The Visualization of Gift Giving in Byzantium and the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia', in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 33–61.
- 'Icons and Iconomachy', in L. James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 323–37.
- Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680–ca 850)* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), with J.F. Haldon.

Dictionary Entries

- Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. J. Strayer, 12 vols (New York, 1982–89): 229 entries.
- Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan, 3 vols (New York and Oxford, 1991): 4 entries.

Preface

Angeliki Lymberopoulou

The interpretation of Byzantine texts and artefacts has been a central aspect of the work of Leslie Brubaker throughout her career. It is only natural, therefore, that in a volume of essays, dedicated to her on her sixtieth birthday, a range of such interpretations is presented by authors who not only have been important to Leslie as colleagues, friends, and students, but have also benefited greatly from her research, publications and friendship. Its main themes are the identification of 'visions', 'messages', and 'meanings' in various facets of Byzantine culture and the possible differences in the perception of these visions, messages and meanings as seen by their original audience and by modern scholars. The volume addresses the methodological question of how far interpretations should go – whether there is a tendency to read too much into too little or, *vice versa*, not enough attention is paid to apparent minutiae that may have been important in their historical context. As the successive essays span a wide chronological era, the book also presents an opportunity to assess the relative degrees of continuity and change in Byzantine visions, messages and meanings over time. Thus, as is highlighted in the concluding section written by Chris Wickham, the book discusses the validity of existing notions regarding the fluidity of Byzantine culture. It clarifies when continuity was a matter of a rigid adherence to traditional values and when a manifestation of the ability to adapt old conventions to new circumstances. More importantly it shows that, in some respects, Byzantine cultural history may have been less fragmented than is usually assumed. Similarly, by reflecting not just on new interpretations, but also on the process of interpreting itself, the papers combined in this volume demonstrate how research within Byzantine studies has evolved over the past 30 years from a set of narrowly defined individual disciplines into a broader exploration of interconnected cultural phenomena – a development in which Leslie Brubaker has been instrumental.

Editorial Policy

In rendering the Greek names and place-names mentioned in this volume the standard anglicized forms, where they exist, have been used (for example Constantine instead of Konstantinos). For the rest, following a trend that has been gaining acceptance recently, all names have been transcribed as literally as possible avoiding the various latinized versions (Komnenos instead of Comnenus, Nikephoros instead of Nicephorus). If someone was a Latin-speaker, then the ending *-us* has been, appropriately, maintained (Theodosius, Euphrasius, Claudius). It goes without saying that in all publications cited in the footnotes the names have remained unchanged and appear as their authors intended.

Acknowledgements

This book is a labour of love by many people, who all worked hard and full of enthusiasm to materialize – a clear reflection of Leslie’s popularity. Special thanks to Chris Wickham for his invaluable help with organizing this volume, for his many and astute contributions and for his important advice throughout; to John Smedley for his meticulous and precise comments and for allowing it all to happen; to Kalliroe Linardou for providing Leslie’s biography and publications; to Rebecca Day for compiling the index; and to Celia Barlow, Beatrice Beaup, Rembrandt Duits, Basilius J. Groen, Jonathan Harris, Dimitra Kotoula, Rose Mephram, Diana Newall, Tassos Papakostas, Julie Pardue, Lyn Rodley, Albert Stewart, Andrew Tinson, and Vasiliki Tsamakda for their constructive criticism, useful suggestions, support and help (practical and otherwise). Last, but by no means least I would like to thank all the contributors for their commitment, precision, punctuality and understanding. Obviously all the shortfalls and mistakes in this volume are entirely my responsibility.

handles actually are. In other words, holding Projecta's casket offers a very different reading of it from simply seeing it.

Touch was a pervasive, but perhaps secondary, sense in Byzantium. Almost every Byzantine text contains accounts of touching. The Gospels, perhaps the most important texts in Byzantine ideology, are full of stories of people who touched or were touched by Christ, culminating in Mary Magdalene who was told not to touch (John 20:17) and doubting Thomas who wanted to place his hand in Christ's wounds to be assured that Christ had risen (John 20: 24–9). Hagiography details a myriad of saints who performed miracles through touch. Saint Artemios, the patron saint of male genital injuries, would appear in visions to the afflicted and heal them through painfully squeezing, trampling or lancing their diseased testicles.¹⁰ Symeon the Stylite (c.389–459) was touched by Antonios to discover whether he was dead; Daniel the Stylite (409–93) was physically defrosted by his followers; Theodore of Sykeon (d. 613) averted a plague of locusts by holding three in his hand and praying over them until they died.¹¹ Ascetic saints used touch in a variety of ways to mortify the flesh, through wearing fetters or hairshirts, or by standing on columns, for example. Touching is apparent in every possible human context, from tearing out tongues to kissing babies. Texts – manuscripts – were themselves tactile objects and touching them formed part of their performative role.¹² In his sixth-century account of the ambo of Hagia Sophia, Paul the Silentiary suggests that during the liturgy, the priest held the 'golden book' aloft whilst the crowds strove to touch it with their lips and hands, breaking around the ambo like the sea.¹³ A letter could not only be treasured for what it said but for its actual physical existence.¹⁴ If Byzantine readers used a pointer or their finger to trace words on the page, then the act of reading was itself tactile.

10 V.S. Crisafulli and J.W. Nesbitt (eds), *The Miracles of St Artemios* (Leiden, 1997), e.g. Miracles 13, 29, 35.

11 Symeon the Stylite: *Life of Symeon the Stylite* by Antonios, trans. R. Doran, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo, 1992), ch. 28. Daniel the Stylite: *Life of Daniel the Stylite*, ed. H. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites* (Brussels and Paris 1923), ch. 43; trans. E. Dawes and N. Baynes, *Three Byzantine saints* (Crestwood, 1977). Theodore of Sykeon: *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, ed. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Theodore de Sykeon* (Brussels, 1970), ch. 36; trans. Dawes and Baynes, *Three Byzantine saints*.

12 R.S. Nelson, 'The discourse of icons, then and now', *ArtH* 12 (1989): pp. 144–57, especially pp. 154–5 on kissing manuscripts. R.S. Nelson, 'Empathetic vision: looking at and with a performative Byzantine miniature', *ArtH* 30 (2007): pp. 489–502, opens ways of discussing touch in the context of performance. A. Papalexandrou, 'Memory tattered and torn: spolia in the heartland of Byzantine Hellenism' in R.M. van Dyke and S.E. Alcock (eds), *Archaeologies of memory* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 56–81, has hinted at tactility in the context of sculpted inscriptions.

13 Paul the Silentiary, *Description of the Ambo of Hagia Sophia*, ed. P. Friedlander, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1912), lines 245–51.

14 M. Mullett, 'The language of diplomacy' in J. Shepard and S. Franklin (eds), *Byzantine diplomacy* (Aldershot, 1992), pp. 203–16.

A sense of tactility does come across in Byzantine writings about art, above all in mention of different qualities of materials, especially smoothness and roughness, weights and measures: the mention of floors of onyx 'so smoothly polished' that they were like water congealed to ice; of unpolished stones used for rough steps; of gilding with pure gold two fingers thick; of corrugated altar-covers; and of gold crosses, 80 pounds in weight and encrusted with jewels.¹⁵ One thing that this tactility reveals is the monetary value of art. It also underlines that touching something serves to verify it in some way, as with the experience of handling Projecta's casket. Sight does not tell us everything about the intrinsic qualities of an object. It cannot reveal its weight, for example, or its texture.¹⁶ Touch does. So holding something might serve as a guarantee of quality or of quantity.

Although it is never explicitly stated in Byzantine writings, aesthetically Byzantine art invites touch. As I have argued elsewhere, entering a building was in part a tactile experience, with the movement from exterior to interior, warm to chill, the change of materials underfoot, the range of objects to make contact with.¹⁷ The marble sheathing used in great churches offered a sense of coolness to any worshipper who might choose to touch it, and the very stones of a building could be used in tactile prayer, as with the column of Saint Gregory the Wonderworker in Hagia Sophia on which the faithful rubbed themselves in search of healing.¹⁸ The near-three-dimensionality of, for example, some Byzantine ivories or the metal icon of the Archangel Michael, surely offered their owners a tactile experience, unless we believe that they were enclosed in cabinets of curiosities to be kept out of the reach of idle hands.¹⁹ When the appearances and functions of such objects are considered, touch is usually overlooked, but perhaps should be included in these contexts. The hardstone cups, such as the Chalice of the Patriarchs, that spring to life when raised to the light, had to be handled in the first instance.²⁰ How did the enamels and jewels that so often form a part of Byzantine decoration of these objects

15 'Floors of onyx': *Digenis Akritis, The Grottaferrata and Escorial versions*, trans. and ed. E. Jeffreys (Cambridge, 1998), Grottaferrata Text, Book 7, lines 56–8; 'rough steps': Paul the Silentiary, *Description of the Ambo of Hagia Sophia*, lines 214–15; 'two fingers of pure gold and gold crosses of eighty pounds': *Narratio of Hagia Sophia*, ed. T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* (Leipzig, 1901), vol. 1, pp. 15 and 16.

16 See C. Classen, 'Touch in the museum' in Classen (ed.), *Book of Touch*, pp. 275–9, for a discussion of these themes in a museum context.

17 L. James, 'Senses and sensibility in Byzantium', *ArtH* 27 (2004): pp. 522–37.

18 This story is recorded by Anthony of Novgorod, cited by G.P. Majeska, *Russian travellers to Constantinople in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries* (Washington, 1984), p. 214 and n. 68, and by Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, trans. E.H. McNeal (Columbia, 1936), p. 106.

19 On the icon of Michael: Pentcheva, 'Responding icon', pp. 639–40.

20 The most recent image and catalogue entry of the Chalice of the Patriarchs is in R.S. Cormack and M. Vassilaki (eds), *Byzantium 330–1453* (London, 2007), p. 402 (cat. 81). On the visual aspects of the chalice: Pentcheva, 'Responding icon', p. 643.

interact with physical hands on the object? Were they positioned in such a way as to provide a grip for the fingers and a stimulus of touch? As with Projecta's casket, one would need to handle such objects to see where the hands might best fit. Further, if this particular cup was used as a chalice in the liturgy, then touch would have been very much a part of any user's experience of it, ahead, perhaps of sight, and so we should consider what it feels like.

It is a truism that the Byzantines engaged physically with works of art. Written sources contain many stories about people holding, kissing, hugging, biting, consuming works of art. Some physically carried icons with them wherever they went, either on their person or in their luggage.²¹ Amulets and pilgrim tokens, or eulogia, were worn or carried by believers, their physical proximity on the body causing relief.²² The fourth-century pilgrim, Egeria, described chunks being taken out of relics of the True Cross via the teeth of the faithful; removing the fingers and toes of saints in this way was also a popular pilgrim activity.²³ One very well-known story tells of a woman healed by Saints Cosmas and Damien after drinking part of a wall-painting of the saints, and clay eulogia were regularly consumed by believers seeking healing or protection.²⁴ One of the most significant of all holy images, the Mandyllion of Edessa, was formed not through painting but through touch. As an *acheiropoietos* image, an image not made with human hands, it was created through physical contact when Christ washed his face and, in drying it on a cloth, left the imprint of his features there. As the cloth came into contact with other objects, so the image continued to replicate itself.²⁵ Paradoxically, bodily contact with images played a major role in Iconoclasm when images were physically destroyed, eyes gouged out, and figures covered up or mutilated in some way.

None of this should be surprising; it would be more remarkable if writers did not mention touch. In a way, touch has been overlooked because it is so banal and everyday a sensation; it is a part of the human condition to be tactile. However, societies have their own rules of touch and so in this context, the contexts of touching in Byzantium can tell us something of the social customs of that society: the socialization of touch; the tactile codes of communication and the rules of contact – what might be expressed as the difference between

21 See, for example, *Miracula SS Cosmae et Damiani*, ed. L. Deubner *Kosmas und Damian* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1907), Miracle 13; partial trans. in C. Mango, *Art of the Byzantine empire 312–1453. Sources and documents* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 138–9.

22 G. Vikan, 'Art, medicine and magic in early Byzantium', *DOP* 38 (1984): pp. 65–86.

23 *Itinerarium Egeriae*, ed. P. Geyer and O. Cuntz, *Itineraria et alia geographica* (Turnhout, 1965), ch. 37.3; trans. J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (Warminster, 2002).

24 *Miracula SS Cosmae et Damiani*, Miracle 15.

25 For the Mandyllion: A.M. Cameron, 'The history of the image of Edessa: the telling of a story', in C. Mango and O. Pritsak (eds), *Okeanos, Studies presented to Ihor Ševčenko* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984), pp. 80–94; H. Kessler and G. Wolf (eds), *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (Milan, 1998).

a handshake and a kiss, what it meant to kiss the feet of an emperor, the hands of a saint, the lips of an icon, how the bite of a dog and the bite of the believer on the True Cross were understood. Issues such as these relate to ideas of social decorum: who could touch whom, when, where and how?²⁶ What was touch for? Why and what did people touch? Which parts of an icon, for example, were touched? How did people touch different things? What did touch achieve? Conventions about tactile interaction (even something as 'simple' as gender differences) give information about social differentiation, about defining personhood and status. Standards of acceptable forms of touch change as concepts of proper forms of corporeal behaviour and social order change. There are different rules of decorum. The idea of biting the True Cross is shocking now, but this was a time when relics were treated roughly; they were regularly stolen, snatched, or torn asunder.²⁷

Images of touch can add to our knowledge of hierarchies and relationships between people in Byzantium. It is often assumed, for example, that hands are veiled when coming into contact with holy objects or figures. This is true, but only up to a point. In the sixth-century apse mosaic of the Eufasian Basilica in Poreč (Fig. 1.1), for example, as the viewer moves out from the centre, the Virgin's hands are bare touching Christ, the angels flanking them extend one bare hand but the hands holding their sceptres are inside their robes.²⁸ Beyond them, Saint Maurus to the viewer's left and the saint to the right hold their crowns of martyrdom in veiled hands. On the left again, Bishop Eufasius brings his church with veiled hands, but the Archdeacon Claudius, at the far left, holds a book in his bare hands, though his small son holds candles in veiled hands. To the right, the two anonymous saints carry their tokens, a book and a crown, in veiled hands. This one mosaic alerts us to the knowledge that whose hands were veiled when is more complicated than simply contact with the holy. Why in this image did Claudius' hands remain unveiled? In similar vein, in the sixth-century apse mosaic of San Vitale in Ravenna (Fig. 1.2), one of the angels touches the shoulder of Saint Vitale with a bare hand, though his other hand is veiled. In Sant' Apollinare Nuovo (Fig. 1.3), some of the male and female saints hold their crowns with veiled hands or one veiled hand, others touch their crowns with bare flesh. Should we see the veiling as random and accidental at the artists' whim? Does it depend on the

26 For decorum: M. Baxandall, *Painting and experience in fifteenth-century Italy* (Oxford, 1972) and L. Syson and D. Thornton (eds), *Objects of virtue: art in Renaissance Italy* (London, 2001). On touch and communication generally: R. Finnegan, 'Tactile communication' in Classen (ed.), *Book of Touch*, pp. 18–25.

27 A. Eastmond, 'Body vs. column: the cults of St Symeon Stylites' in L. James (ed.), *Desire and denial in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 87–100.

28 See A. Terry and H. Maguire, *Dynamic splendor* (Penn State, 2007) on this church and its mosaics, esp. pp. 109–16 on this scene.

Imagine cu drept de autor

Fig. 1.1 Apse mosaic showing the Virgin and Child enthroned, angels, saints, clerics, laymen and Bishop Eufrasius, mid-sixth century, Eufrasian basilica, Poreč (photo: Renco Kosinožić, used with permission).

saint? To answer these questions, a more detailed study of veiling, within a broader context of touch and its significance, is necessary.

As these examples also illustrate, touch can indicate social hierarchies: angels touch saints, not *vice versa*. Who Christ touches when may also be suggestive: Christ in his divinity never touches anyone, but in scenes of his life on earth, touching is far more prominent, both by Christ and of Christ.²⁹

²⁹ In this context, I wonder if there is a change after Iconoclasm in the relationship between Christ and touch.

of the person depicted, is made apparent through touch. Kissing an icon is like kissing a portrait, coming into contact with the living presence of the person depicted. A sense of this is given by theological writings of the eighth century, from the period of controversy known to us as Iconoclasm, when the Byzantine world was divided over the place of religious images, most specifically icons, in religious worship.³³ This dispute was a battle about the corporeal reality of Christ, made present through the representation of God in religious images: could a corporeal representation be made after the image of the incorporeal and divine God? How could a material image represent Christ?³⁴

Although both sides framed the debate in terms of the visual, the material and the tactile also had parts to play. One of the points about the icon was that its materiality made the divine visible, and with that visibility came tactility. For the Byzantines, the material world and the spiritual world could be brought together – conjoined – through visible, tangible images, and the spiritual world was made tactile in an icon. This is a view very different from attitudes in the medieval West, where some theologians separated the material world from the spiritual realm.³⁵ In the period of Iconoclasm, we see the Byzantines bringing the two together. With icons, touch played a part in the justification of religious imagery, and touching an icon reinforced the more abstract theological belief of its nature in portraying the divine. Touch, as well as sight, made the holy person present through his or her icon. It was no wonder that holy images could respond in tactile ways to the believer or non-believer, by bleeding, exuding oil, even causing death.³⁶ Icons suggested that matter was not inanimate.

In this context of the animation of matter, relics also played an important role. Relics possessed something of the power of the saint. They were not dead and inanimate but rather were dynamic material presences, objects endowed with life and with agency.³⁷ Unlike looking at an object, touching

33 L. Brubaker, 'Icons before Iconoclasm?' in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, (2 vols, Spoleto, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 1215–54.

34 G.B. Ladner, 'The concept of the image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclast controversy', *DOP* 7 (1953): pp. 1–34.

35 A. Louth, 'The body in Western Catholic Christianity' in Coakley (ed.), *Religion and the body*, pp. 111–30.

36 Bleeding icons: of Christ, *The letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos and related texts*, trans. and eds J.A.Munitiz, J. Chrysostomides, E. Harvalia-Crook, Ch. Dendrinos (London, 1997), 7.12 and 7.13a, pp. 46–7; of the Virgin, *Letter of the Three Patriarchs* 7.7, pp. 40–41. Exuding oil: an icon of Saint Theodora of Thessaloniki, *Vita S Theodora Thessal.* ch. 54, ed. S.A. Paschalidis, *Ὁ βίος τῆς ὁσιομυροβλύτιδος Θεοδώρας τῆς ἐν Θεσσαλονίκη. Δύγηση περὶ τῆς μεταθέσεως τοῦ τιμίου λειψάνου τῆς ὁσίας Θεοδώρας* (Thessaloniki, 1991) with modern Greek translation; trans. A.-M. Talbot, 'St Theodora of Thessalonike' in A.-M. Talbot (ed.), *Holy Women of Byzantium* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1996). Causing death: an icon of the Virgin, described in Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. De Boor (2 vols, Leipzig, 1883), vol. 1, AM 6218.

37 G. Frank, *The memory of the eyes* (Berkeley, 2000). A. Gell, *Art and agency: an anthropological theory* (Oxford, 1998); D. Chidester, 'Material terms for the study of religion',

it is two-way. Wearing an amulet, for example, kept the faithful in constant physical contact with the image it portrayed or the person it was once a part of; it or, more accurately, the holy figure, touched the wearer in return. At this point of physical contact, miracles could occur: an eulogia of Symeon Stylites the Younger (591–92) was crumbled to still the sea; in the Tuesday procession of the Hodegetria icon, according to Stephen of Novgorod, writing in the fourteenth century, the icon directed its blindfolded bearers through touch.³⁸ Touch was a means of possessing the relic and thus the holy. Questions about who might want to touch a relic, who could touch it, why would they touch it, when would they touch it, who controls the touch, what could its touch do for the toucher – the difference between access to the imperial collection of relics and the relics of a saint in his own public church – all these issues combine to build up a 'social history' of touching which, for Byzantium, remains unwritten.

Furthermore, relics are corporeal, sharing the paradox of icons: both displayed and verified God's corporeality, using materials to reveal the reality of the divine. With relics, Georgia Frank has discussed the equally paradoxical situation of the pilgrim who, in visiting holy men and holy women, travelled to experience a corporeal, tangible, divine human body.³⁹ Pilgrims were great touchers. Everything we read tells of them touching relics, gathering dirt, rubbing inscriptions. Touch, like sight, could cross the boundaries between the holy and the human and seems to have been a fundamental part of religious experience. But touch also had potential for destruction: in the hands of pilgrims, holy men could, literally, fall apart, as the fourth-century monk, Paphnoutios, discovered when he grasped the arm of a holy man and it disintegrated into dust.⁴⁰

In considering touching the holy, I want to reflect, briefly, on attitudes towards that corporeal, divine human body of which relics were living proof. The conventional view of Early Christian and Byzantine attitudes to the body tends to be that the Christian monastic tradition saw flesh as the metaphor for fallen man and the irrational rejection of God; and that the passionate

Journal of the American Academy of Religion 68 (2000): pp. 367–80 (esp. p. 377).

38 Symeon Stylite the Younger: *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune*, trans. and ed. P. van den Ven (Brussels, 1962 and 1970), p. 236. Stephen of Novgorod, text and trans. in Majeska, *Russian travellers*, p. 37; quoted and discussed in B. Pentcheva, *Icons and power. The Mother of God in Byzantium* (Penn State, 2006), pp. 133–4. G. Vikan, 'Byzantine pilgrims' art' in L. Safran (ed.), *Heaven on earth: art and the church in Byzantium* (Pennsylvania State, 1998), pp. 229–66, includes many examples of the miraculous tactility of pilgrimage art.

39 Frank, *Memory of the eyes*, esp. p. 118. Although Frank's primary concern is with sight, she has some important discussions of touch, including its relation with sight and memory.

40 Paphnutius, *Vita Onnophrios*, ed. E.A.W. Budge, *Coptic texts* (London, 1914–15), vol. 4, ch. 2; trans. T. Vivian, *Paphnutius, Histories of the monks of Upper Egypt and the Life of Onnophrius* (Kalamazoo, 1993), pp. 145–6.

body needed disciplining through diet, meditation and constraint.⁴¹ It was the Christian's duty to master the threat of the body. But, if touch is used as a way of understanding attitudes to the physical in Byzantium, then, as Kallistos Ware has shown, this view needs nuancing or, perhaps, even reversing.⁴² He suggests that, in Greek Christianity, what is apparent is not a rejection of the body but a tension or an ambivalence: in theory the body is fundamentally good, though in practice, it may be more problematic. Ascetic practices are almost always defined as mortifications of the flesh, punishing the body to make it holy, depriving it of sensation or offering it sensations of the more unpleasant kind, especially where touch is concerned. However, texts about asceticism, as Ware points out, actually present a more balanced view than this, suggesting that asceticism might be seen as a struggle for the body rather than against it. Many ascetic texts give the body an important sensory role. John Klimakos, writing in the seventh century, said of his body: 'he is my helper and my enemy, my assistant and my opponent, a protector and a traitor'. 'How can I hate him when my nature disposes me to love him? ... How can I escape from him when he is going to rise with me?'⁴³ This is a more ambivalent attitude to physicality than one that locates the body as enemy.

Ware has shown how human physicality was understood by early Christians in various ways which he explains as bids to resolve the tension between the Hebraic-biblical tradition of the holistic understanding of human person and the Platonic-Hellenistic tradition of soul/body dualism.⁴⁴ Into this mix came the Fall of Man and the question of the distinction between the pre- and post-Fall body, the idea of the Word becoming flesh and the role played by the physical body of Christ, embodying salvation, and the belief in the resurrection of the body at the Second Coming – something inherently sinful could not rise again. In this context, the body, physicality and tactility became positives: the created body was a temple because it was potentially holy and was created by God. As Ware says, it is worth noting how often ascetics are rewarded by 'things of the flesh'.⁴⁵ The ascetic Onouphrios (c.400) suffered all sorts of bodily mortifications, but was rewarded by wonderful food from God; Anthony's physical austerities did not reduce him to withered skin and bone but restored him to a more healthy and natural state; Symeon the Stylite, despite 'stinking like a dog', passed away in an odour of holiness.⁴⁶

41 See for example, P. Brown, *The body and society. Men, women and sexual renunciation in Early Christianity* (London, 1989); B.S. Turner, 'The body in Western society: social theory and its perspectives' in Coakley (ed.), *Religion and the body*, pp. 15–41 (esp. pp. 21–2).

42 Ware, 'My helper'.

43 John Klimakos, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. C. Luibheid and N. Russell (New York, 1982), chs 185–6.

44 Ware, 'My helper', p. 91.

45 Ware, 'My helper', pp. 99–100.

46 Paphnutius, *Vita Onouphrios*, ch. 2; Anthony: Athanasios, *Life of Anthony*, sections 14 and 93; Symeon the Stylite: Antonios, *Life of Symeon Stylites*, chs 8 and 29.

In all of this, it is critical to be aware of how the Byzantines themselves rated touch and the senses. As is well-known, the Byzantines believed that sight was a tactile medium and that seeing was a tactile experience.⁴⁷ Rays from the eyes came out and embraced the object being regarded, bringing it back to the mind, imprinting its form on the memory. In this context, the words of the ninth-century Patriarch Photios, in his homily on the image of the Virgin in the apse of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, are frequently cited: 'Having somehow through the outpouring and effluence of the optical rays touched and encompassed the object, [sight] too sends the essence of the thing seen on to the mind ... Has the mind seen? Has it grasped? Has it visualised? Then it has effortlessly transmitted the forms to the memory.'⁴⁸

Photios' statement suggests that for the Byzantines sight and touch worked very similarly, that they were in fact convergent or even conjoined senses, a philosophy of the workings of sight derived from the Classical philosopher Aristotle.⁴⁹ In Western thought, Aristotle is seen as placing sight and touch as the top and bottom ends of the scale of senses. However, his view of touch is more complicated than this implies. For Aristotle, touch may not have been the most noble sense but it does seem to have been the primary sense, the most necessary sense, without which no other sense was possible.⁵⁰ Unlike the other senses, it does not belong to a single organ; indeed, does it have an organ: are skin and flesh the organs of touch or the media of touch? Is the heart the organ?⁵¹ Rather, touch is a sense of communication, bringing distant objects into proximity. In the *De Anima*, it is clear that there is a distinction made between valid sensory pleasures and bestial or carnal appetites. As Aristotle notes, humans are the only sentient beings able to make this distinction for their sense of touch is far more developed than that of anything in the animal kingdom.⁵² Touch, like sight, can be carnal; but like sight, it can also be profound. It can verify, it can communicate presence and empathy, it brings together body, world and flesh. Susan Stewart has suggested that for Aristotle, touch was the sense needed for being; the other four senses were necessary

47 R.S. Nelson, 'To say and to see: ekphrasis and vision in Byzantium' in R.S. Nelson (ed.), *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 143–68.

48 Photios, *Homily 17*, 5. Text in: Photios, *Homilies*, ed. B. Laourda (Thessaloniki, 1959). This translation comes from C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople: Translation and Commentary* (Harvard, 1958), p. 294.

49 R. Sorabji, 'Aristotle on demarcating the five senses' in J. Barnes, M. Schofield and R. Sorabji (eds), *Articles on Aristotle, Psychology and Ethics* (London, 1997), vol. 4, pp. 134–65; T.K. Johansen, *Aristotle on the sense organs* (Cambridge, 1998); M. Paterson, *The senses of touch. Haptics, affects and technologies* (Oxford and New York, 2007), pp. 2–3, 17–20 discusses Aristotle. Also see the discussion in Frank, *Memory of the eyes*, p. 118.

50 Aristotle, *De Anima*, ed. W.S. Hett (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1936, repr. 1975), III, xiii, 435a, lines 13–14.

51 Ibid., II, xi, 422b–4a; III, I, 424b; III, xiii, 435a and 439a; Johansen, *Aristotle*, pp. 199–215.

52 Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, ix, 421a, lines 22–6.

for well-being.⁵³ In Aristotelian terms therefore, touch might be understood as the most profound of the senses. Aristotle also appears to say that sensible perception depends on touch, that is to say contact between the perceptible object and perception itself: the perceiving organ needs a means of being in touch with the object. For sight, hearing and smelling, this medium is air or water. Sight, hearing and smell all work through touch (as, indeed, does taste). For Aristotle, it seems the case that we relate to the world through a single sense organ, the body, in which all the senses are united. Following Aristotle, it might be argued that the single sense organ is the organ of touch.

The Byzantines appear to have shared these views. The tenth-century *Souda* lexicon, a compilation of entries ranging from etymologies and grammatical forms, to accounts of people and places, discusses touch on several occasions.⁵⁴ The entry under *aisthesis, senses*, borrows considerably from the sixth-century philosopher, John Philoponos and from Aristotle.⁵⁵ It describes sight as clearer than hearing, hearing as clearer than smelling, and smelling as clearer than either touch or taste. But touch, it suggests, is not really a sense at all, but is present in relation to defining the properties of anything and everything: the other senses all share qualities of tactility.

Touch mattered in Byzantium. Being present in relation to defining the properties of anything and everything, touch was all-embracing. Touch had meaning in Byzantium. What the Byzantines touched and how they touched it were everyday social conventions; the tactile body was itself an everyday object and, for the Byzantines, God was an everyday tangible reality. In this context, using the senses to deal with the incomprehensibility of God was perfectly sensible. It is we who struggle with the paradox within Byzantine art, that of the use of the material and sensual to achieve the spiritual, a placing of the living or dead body at the centre of religious experience, a use of the tactile to apprehend the divine, whilst attempting to transcend the body through the use of the senses. Edith Wyschogrod's statement that 'Touch is not a sense at all; it is in fact a metaphor for the impingement of the world as a whole upon subjectivity ... to touch is to comport oneself not in opposition to the given but in proximity with it'⁵⁶ is one that any Byzantine might have recognized.

53 Ibid., III, xii, 434b, lines 23–6: 'an animal cannot exist without a sense of touch'. Also see *ibid.*, III, xii, 435b, lines 19–26. S. Stewart, 'Remembering the senses' in Howes (ed.), *Empire of the senses*, pp. 59–69 (esp. p. 61).

54 *Suida Lexicon*, ed. A. Adler (Leipzig, 1928–29), for example A 207, A 2733, A4561.

55 *Ibid.*, A 326. For a translation and commentary: *Suda On Line*, <http://www.stoa.org>. The headword is 'aistheseis', translated as '5 senses'.

56 E. Wyschogrod, 'Doing before hearing: on the primacy of touch' in F. Laruell (ed.), *Textes pour Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris, 1980), pp. 179–203; quoted in Paterson, *Senses of touch*, p. 147.

Imagine cu drept de autor

Imagine cu drept de autor

Fig. 2.1 Apse mosaic showing Christ, angels, St. Vitalis and Bishop Ecclesius, mid-sixth century, San Vitale, Ravenna (and detail with Ecclesius) (photo: author).

Imagine cu drept de autor

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Fig. 2.2 Apse mosaic showing the Virgin and Child enthroned, angels, saints, clerics, laymen and Bishop Eufrasius, mid-sixth century, Eufrasian Basilica, Poreč (and detail with Eufrasius) (photo: Renco Kosinožić, used with permission of Ann Terry and Henry Maguire).

subject of a heated debate among scholars. After Einar Dyggve discarded any literal interpretation of late antique depictions of architecture,⁴ in the 1940s Richard Krautheimer addressed – and largely solved – the major problems of architectural representation, pointing out the parallel between the inaccuracy inherent to an architectural copy or representation in painting or sculpture to its counterpart in medieval literary descriptions.⁵ In these representations, the actual building seems broken into pieces, some of its elements carefully chosen before being regrouped in the final depiction. The ‘copy’ resulting from this process is quite different from the original, as it does not reproduce all the elements of the latter, their structural relationships or relative dimensions. However, the inaccuracy of the copy is counterbalanced by the reproduction of the content and significance of the building, which are the major concerns in the creation of a building’s copy or depiction.⁶ Some 20 years later, Paul Lampl reached the same conclusion by schematizing the most common principles of medieval representation of buildings from the fourth to the twelfth century.⁷

Noël Duval devoted much of his work to architectural representations, analysing a substantial amount of evidence and defining interpretative schemes largely concentrating on the depiction of basilicas.⁸ Duval affirms

4 E. Dyggve, *Ravennatum Palatium Sacrum. La basilica ipetrale per cerimonia* (København, 1941) claims that late antique architectural representations did represent real buildings, however translating them into a flat and two-dimensional view. Much of the discourse on late antique architectural representations has developed around the image of Theoderic’s palace in the mosaics of Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna and Dyggve’s ‘reconstruction’ of this image as a *basilica discoperta*.

5 R. Krautheimer, ‘Introduction to an “Iconography of Medieval Architecture”’, *JWCI* 5 (1942): pp. 1–20.

6 Krautheimer, ‘Introduction’, pp. 19–21.

7 P. Lampl, ‘Schemes of Architectural Representation in Early Medieval Art’, *Marsyas*, 9 (1960–61): pp. 6–13.

8 The author developed his understanding of late antique architectural representations through a study of the images of the Utrecht Psalter and the already-mentioned mosaic of Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo: N. Duval, ‘La représentation du palais dans l’art du Bas-Empire et du Haut Moyen Age d’après le Psautier d’Utrecht’, *CahArc*, 15 (1965): pp. 207–54; ‘La mosaïque du palatium de S. Apollinaire le neuf représente-t-elle une façade ou un édifice aplani?’, *Corsi di Cultura sull’Arte Ravennate e Bizantina*, 25 (1978): pp. 93–122 revised in ‘Que savons-nous du palais de Théodoric à Ravenne?’, *Mélanges d’Archéologie et d’Histoire de l’Ecole Française de Rome*, 72 (1960) : pp. 337–71. Just like in the Utrecht Psalter the illustrator depicted the Temple of Jerusalem, the king’s palace, and the *ecclesia* as an apsidal basilica (Duval, ‘La représentation du palais’, p. 254), at Ravenna, the image of Theoderic’s palace represents an apsidal hall (Duval, ‘La mosaïque du palatium’, pp. 112–14). According to Duval, the basilica is a conventional image that may represent a church as well as an imperial palace and the basilica type, within or without a walled enceinte, is also a symbolic representation of the city: N. Duval, ‘La représentation des monuments dans l’antiquité tardive. À propos de deux livres récents’, *Bulletin Monumental*, 138 (1980): pp. 77–95 and ‘Le rappresentazioni architettoniche’, in M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata (eds), *Umm al-Rasas Mayfa’ah. Gli scavi del complesso di Santo Stefano* (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 165–230.

that late antique depictions of buildings are 'synthetic representations':⁹ some are more schematic and others more elaborate, representing the original by combining internal and external elements in a sort of 'flattened perspective' (*perspective aplanie*).¹⁰ This leads Duval to develop a series of schemes that allow him to do the opposite process and reconstruct the 'original building' (or buildings) from the depiction.¹¹ In the majority of cases, neither a standing 'original building' nor sufficient archaeological evidence exists to evaluate Duval's rendering of the building and, in turn, his reconstruction. His theory is based on the conviction that late antique architectural representations are purely conventional.¹² However, in the case of church models in the hands of their patrons, he admits both a realistic and a symbolic value, insofar as the model generally recalls the building without being an accurate and complete depiction.¹³ In my opinion, these inaccurate models do contain very realistic elements and their symbolic character goes far beyond the simple issue of recalling the original.

As has already been pointed out, it would be difficult to identify the original church from the models discussed here, despite the reproduction of some distinctive features of the originals. In Poreč, the sort of crenellation supporting the upper roof in the Eufasian model can be seen in the northern side of the original church, where a row of small corbels projects out of the wall to support the roof gutter.¹⁴ The original building probably bore two crosses rather than the three represented in the model. The curtain drawn to one side, which partially covers the entrance, also represents the one that was hung on the hangers still visible on the original doors.¹⁵ In Ecclesius' model, the brick

9 Duval, 'La représentation du palais', p. 254. Duval developed further an idea already found in Krautheimer and Lampl.

10 For a recent reassessment of his views: N. Duval, 'Note additionnelle', *Antiquité Tardive*, 7 (1999): pp. 394–400.

11 Duval, 'La représentation du palais'; *idem*, 'Le rappresentazioni architettoniche', p. 350 fig. 12; *idem*, 'Note additionnelle', pp. 394–400.

12 This effectively suggests that the role of architecture itself is essentially functional, with no significant symbolic value. For Duval's view of church models: Duval, 'Note additionnelle', p. 394. According to Duval, the city's main church is sometimes used to represent the city as a whole in the eastern mosaic vignettes (Duval, 'Le rappresentazioni architettoniche'). However, images of palaces, such as Theodoric's or those in the Utrecht Psalter, are just generic representations (Duval, 'La mosaïque du palatium'). Agreeing with Duval, also G. De Francovich, *Il Palatium di Teodorico e la cosiddetta 'architettura di potenza'* (Roma, 1970) claims architectural representations as purely conventional frames for images.

13 N. Duval, 'Représentations d'églises sur mosaïques', *Revue du Louvre*, 22.6 (1972): p. 445.

14 For corbels outside the northern nave: Terry and Eaves, *Retrieving the Record*, p. 129.

15 E. Russo, *Il complesso eufasiano di Parenzo* (Napoli, 1991), pp. 17–22. At San Vitale holes for the hangers are still visible on the only extant original door (the north-eastern one).

roof of San Vitale's ambulatory¹⁶ and its central bronze roof¹⁷ are respectively represented with red and greenish cubes, while the original bronze cross, still preserved today,¹⁸ is emphasized by a sort of golden lavish base. One therefore sees that, although some features reproduce original elements, both models offer idealized representations of the crosses.

The models were clearly intended to depict the real churches albeit in very general terms, and therefore do not allow for the reconstruction of the original as a whole. This has already been underlined for textual descriptions of buildings,¹⁹ but it is important to underline it in this context for clarifying the scholarly debate on architectural representation. The rather generic character of the model might be due to the difficulty in reproducing a large building on a smaller scale. Yet the models do contain details that correspond to elements of the original buildings, and those details may have been selected among others to be depicted in the model precisely because they were intended to convey further messages.

In the Eufasian model the disproportionate size of the entrance which covers the entire façade suggests its idealized meaning as a whole. Although this could just be due to the simplification of the façade in a model that was meant to be seen from a distance, sources mention that the rebuilding of Poreč's church was motivated by Eufasius' desire to provide the Christians of the city with a larger, more beautiful church as a display of faith.²⁰ In this context, representing a huge entrance with the curtain drawn to one side in place of three doors and a small atrium – which are, from a modern perspective, the most interesting features of the church – was perhaps a way to emphasize the openness of the church for the congregation.

16 The ambulatory originally had a wooden ceiling, probably covered in brick tiles, which was replaced by new vaults during the Middle Ages: F.W. Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken abenlandes. Kommentar* (Wiesbaden, 1976), p. 51. For the restorations: N. Lombardini, 'Le vicende del monumento dal 1860 ad oggi: l'eliminazione delle superfettazioni' and 'Scheda 147' and Silvia Foschi, 'Appunti per una cronologia delle trasformazioni architettoniche di San Vitale', in P. Angiolini Martinelli (ed.), *La basilica di San Vitale a Ravenna* (2 vols, Modena, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 59, 66 (n. 6), 97, 99–100, 102–3, 180–81.

17 The roofs of San Vitale have never been the subject of a detailed study. However, the central nave has probably always been covered in bronze and the ambulatory in brick tiles: Deichmann, *Ravenna*, pp. 65–9. Archival documents mention that the bronze tiles of the central roof were replaced on several occasions: Foschi, 'Appunti', p. 67 n. 37; Lombardini, 'Le vicende', p. 96.

18 The original cross, which was substituted for a copy, is now preserved in the Museo Nazionale of Ravenna: E. Marcato, 'Scheda 699', in A. Martinelli, *La basilica*, vol. 1, p. 247.

19 On the characters of *ekphrasis* however with reference to the middle Byzantine period: H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 22–3; L. Brubaker, 'Perception and Conception: Art, theory and Culture in Ninth-century Byzantium', *Word and Image*, 5.1 (1989): pp. 19–32; L. James and R. Webb, 'To understand ultimate things and enter secret places: Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium', *ArtH*, 14.1 (1991): pp. 1–17.

20 Concerning written sources and inscriptions: B. Molajoli, *La basilica eufasiana di Parenzo* (Padova, 1943), pp. 26–7; Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, vol. 1, pp. 4–5.

with a high evocative character: a bronze plaque of unknown origin (Fig. 2.3),³² as well as three large silver plates coming from hoards, the Kaiseraugst so-called 'Meerstadtplatte' (Fig. 2.4),³³ the Cesena plate (Fig. 2.5),³⁴ and the Sevso hunting dish.³⁵ In all these items the architectural depictions do not function as simple frames for the main decorative subjects but seem to play an important role as meaningful elements of the composition.

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Fig. 2.3 Bronze plaque, mid-fourth century, Florence, Museo Archeologico (inventory no. 2589) (courtesy of the Archivio Fotografico, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana, Florence).

Much scholarship has been devoted to these metalwork objects, especially the plates.³⁶ The structural similarities between them have raised several hypotheses about a possible common origin, but ultimately these have been

32 The bronze plaque is large and concave, bearing holes along its edge, indicating that it was originally nailed to the back of a wooden chair. Florence, Museo Archeologico, inventory no. 2589, length 63 cm, height 16.8–8.9 cm, thickness 0.7 cm, bronze with silver and copper inlay: G. De Tommaso, 'Spalliera di trono', in F. Bisconti and G. Gentili (eds), *La rivoluzione dell'immagine* (Milano, 2007), pp. 142–3.

33 Augst (Switzerland), Römermuseum, inventory no. 1962.2, height 4.7 cm, diameter 59 cm, diameter of the central medallion 16.3 cm, weight 4749.9 g, niello-inlaid silver plate with gilding: E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 'Meerstadtplatte', in H. Cahn and A. Kaufmann-Heinimann (eds), *Der spätrömische Silberschatz von Kaiseraugst* (Derendingen, 1984), vol. 1, pp. 206–24 and B. Rütli, 'Platte mit Villa am Meer (Meerstadtplatte)', in A. Demandt and J. Engemann (eds), *Imperator Caesar Flavius Constantinus. Konstantin der Grosse* (Mainz, 2007), CD Catalogue no. I.11.2.

34 Cesena (Italy), Museo Archeologico, inventory no. SAE 129, diameter 63 cm, weight 6000 g, niello-inlaid silver plate with gilding: P.E. Arias, 'Il piatto argenteo di Cesena', *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene*, 8–10 (1946–48): pp. 310–44.

35 Sevso Treasure, height 3 cm, diameter 70.5 cm, diameter of the central medallion 25.5 cm, weight 6673 g, niello-inlaid silver plate with gilding. The dish shows hunts on its central medallion and outer border, and includes a banquet scene at the centre and a small architectural representation on its rim: M. Mundell Mango, 'The Sevso Treasure Hunting Dish', *Apollo*, July (1990): pp. 2–11, 65–7; M. Mundell Mango and A. Bennet, *The Sevso Treasure* (Ann Arbor, 1994), pp. 55–122.

36 References here only to major and most recent publications, which include further bibliography. The bronze plaque has been dated to the post-Constantinian era: De Tommaso, 'Spalliera di trono', pp. 142–3. The Kaiseraugst dish dates from around 340; the Cesena plate likely belongs to the second half of the fourth century; and the Sevso hunting dish

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Fig. 2.4 Meerstadtplatte, c.340, Augst, Römermuseum (inventory no. 1962.2)
(and detail with the central medallion) (photo: Dieter Widmer [Basel],
courtesy of the Museum Augusta Raurica, Augst, Switzerland).

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Fig. 2.5 Large silver dish, second half of the fourth century, Cesena, Museo Archeologico (inventory no. SAE 129) (photo: courtesy of the Laboratorio Fotografico, Biblioteca Malatestiana, Cesena); opposite, detail with architectural representations: the bottom one is shown upside down (photo: author).

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discarded by Mundell Mango's detailed and definitive study.³⁷ While their architectural representations have served in attempts to reconstruct ancient buildings,³⁸ we have seen in the previous paragraph that such attempts are hazardous at best. Furthermore some architectural representations, such as those depicted in these objects, may have been purely imaginary. Based on these images, it is in fact difficult to decipher the structural relationship between the various parts of the buildings. In the Meerstadtplatte, for instance, facades topped with pediments or domes are depicted near colonnades supporting roofs, without forming coherent architectural structures.

The architectural representations have mostly been interpreted as country villas,³⁹ although some scholars have read the buildings of the Kaiseraugst plate and the two structures on the rim of the Cesena plate as cities.⁴⁰ On the Cesena plate, for instance, the buildings on the rim feature a large door and a walled enceinte. The pediment on the door seems to extend into a roof on the side above the wall. However, a number of other structures with pediments, roofs and even a dome are represented between the wall and the roof. On the Meerstadtplatte, the wall circuit has three openings and several buildings appear behind them. These depictions are essentially different, despite the display of some similarities such as surrounding walls with entrances topped with domes or pediments – elements that could be the main features of a city. However, late antique depictions of cities that adopt the point of view of an observer standing outside the walls, include great walls, towers, monumental entrances and, in most cases, buildings that could easily and clearly be

is dated within the fourth century or between 350 and 430: Mundell Mango, 'The Sevso Treasure', pp. 8–10.

37 Ibid. Hypotheses on the locations of the plates' production, based primarily on their inscriptions and silver stamps, remain speculative. Their iconography has also been compared with mosaics and other artwork as evidence to document late antique daily practices: K. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet. Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 144–8.

38 For example, the architecture depicted on Kaiseraugst dish has been 'broken into pieces' and reassembled in Duval's interpretation of the iconography as a late antique city: N. Duval, 'L'architecture sur le plat dit "à la ville maritime" de Kaiseraugst (première moitié du IV^e siècle): un essai d'interprétation', *Bulletin Monumental*, 146.4 (1988): pp. 341–53.

39 For the Florence plaque: A. Minto, 'Spalliera in bronzo decorata ad intarsio del R. Museo Archeologico di Firenze', *La Critica d'Arte*, 1 (1936): pp. 127–35; De Tommaso, 'Spalliera di trono', p. 143. For the Kaiseraugst plate: Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 'Meerstadtplatte', pp. 221–2; K. Schefold, 'Der Silberschatz und seine Stellung in der spätantiken Kulturgeschichte', in Cahn and Kaufmann-Heinimann (eds), *Der spätantike Silberschatz*, vol. 1, pp. 413–14; Rütli, 'Platte mit Villa'. For the Cesena Plate: M. Bollini, 'Elementi antiquari nei piatti argentei romani', *Studi Romagnoli*, 16 (1965): pp. 103–6. For the Sevso plate: Mundell Mango, Bennet, *The Sevso Treasure*, pp. 93–4.

40 Kaiseraugst plate: Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 'Meerstadtplatte', pp. 221–2; Duval, 'L'architecture sur le plat', pp. 341–53; Cesena plate: Arias, 'Il piatto argenteo', pp. 314, 332–3.

allowing for more precise dating and understanding.⁴⁹ In this architectural context too, hunting and banquet scenes are the reflection of rich owners' real practices; representations of villas in these mosaics probably represent the owner's estates.⁵⁰

The combined appearance of hunting, architectural and banquet scenes on mosaic decoration offers a reliable basis for interpreting the items under examination, which were all found out of context.⁵¹ The juxtaposition of hunting and architectural (as well as convivial) images suggests both a familiarity with these activities and the suitability of this iconography to decorate rich silverware and, in the case of the chair back, furniture.

The choice of the raw material (bronze, silver and gold) as well as that of the technique (niello and gilded silver or copper inlaid metalwork) indicates the peculiarity of the objects. Precious metals were valued not only for their monetary value but also for their shining effects: with the right lighting, they could create light plays enhancing the visual appearance of the place where they were kept.⁵² Although studies on late antique metalwork have shown that metalwork and especially silver is found in association to a broad social spectrum,⁵³ the rich decoration, large size and high quality of the items discussed here suggest wealthy owners. To borrow Leader-Newby's

49 For the life in late antique villas: J. Arce, 'Otium et negotium: the great estates, 4th–7th centuries', in L. Webster and M. Brown (eds), *The Transformation of the Roman World. AD 400–900* (London, 1997); Sfameni, *Ville residenziali*, pp. 166–89.

50 See, for example, the famous *dominus Julius*' mosaic and the mosaic floor with three villas of Tabarka now on display at the Bardo Museum at Tunis: Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, pp. 119–23. For North African mosaics with architectural representations: T. Sarnowski, *Les représentations de villas sur les mosaïques africaines tardives* (Warsaw, 1978), discussed in N. Duval, 'La représentation des monuments dans l'antiquité tardive', *Bulletin Monumental*, 138 (1980): pp. 77–95.

51 The chronological frame for the diffusion of this pattern ranges from the third to the sixth century for mosaics and from the fourth to the fifth century for silver plate. According to Grassigli, 'Il regno della villa', pp. 199–216, the iconography on metal objects and mosaics developed separately; however the appearance of the same themes on both these media is a meaningful expression of mentality.

52 Late antique authors have long celebrated the shining effects of precious metalware exalting their inherent light symbolism: F. Baratte, 'Observations sur la vaisselle d'argent et ses possesseurs à la fin de l'antiquité', *Annals de l'Institut d'Estudis Gironins*, 36 (1996): pp. 74–6; M. Mundell Mango, 'From 'glittering sideboard' to table: silver in the well-appointed *triclinium*', in L. Brubaker and K. Linardou (eds), *Eat, Drink and Be Merry (Luke 12:19) – Food and Wine in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 127–8. On the relationship between vessels and interior décor: E. Swift, 'Decorated Vessels: the Function of Decoration in Late Antiquity', in L. Lavan, T. Putzeys and E. Swift (eds), *Objects in Context, Objects in Use* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 401–7.

53 See especially: Baratte, 'Observations', pp. 63–79; A. Cameron, 'Observations on the distribution and ownership of late Roman silver plate', *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 5 (1992): pp. 178–85.

observation, made in reference to the Sevso plate, the decoration of these plates shows 'the idealized image of the owner and his lifestyle'.⁵⁴

The wooden chair to which the bronze plaque was originally nailed would have been an expensive piece of furniture, playing the double role of a seat and of an indicator of the owner's means, good taste and perhaps status. Large dishes such as the ones discussed here were probably used for banquets or simply put on display in houses where, along with the décor and furniture, they would serve as ways for the house owner to display his wealth, elegance and culture to his guests.⁵⁵ An inscription on the Sevso plate also reveals that they could also be transmitted through inheritance from generation to generation.⁵⁶ Since the plates served both as objects to display to the guests and as heirlooms, their owners would have valued their iconography's power to convey an image of their life as they wished it to be.

Given the simultaneous appearance of hunting and banquet themes on the domestic mosaics and metalware of rich households, representation of great country villas could recall real architecture and serve as a memory of the owner's properties and, in turn, wealth and might. When appearing on house objects and room decoration, such images were meant to reproduce the same impression of wealth given by the appearance of the villas in the countryside. Representations of country mansions, however, should not be considered as strictly accurate 'photos' of the estates, because they also bear a strong ideal and symbolic value. Villas represent a location, the country mansion, around which are taking place the activities from which the owner built his wealth (symbolized in the pastoral scenes) and in which he spends his free time (hunts and banquets). Great domestic architecture – real or imaginary – was considered as an icon and even imaginary villas could serve as representations of the household's elite status for future generations. Thus, these depictions of villas convey messages and work as a model for both the purchaser-patron, who saw them as a symbol of himself, and the beholder, who associates those images to the 'real life' of great estates' owners.

In this paper, I have tried to demonstrate that the two categories of architectural representations analysed acted as 'models', idealized reproductions symbolizing their patrons and conveying the same meaning

54 R. Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 7. For the ideal character of these representations: Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, pp. 146, 164, 174; Grassigli, 'Il regno della villa', pp. 199–226.

55 For the use of such silverware: Mundell Mango, 'From "glittering sideboard" to table', pp. 128–30.

56 Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society*, pp. 3–4. For the inscription: *Ibid.*, p. 1; Mundell Mango and Bennet, *The Sevso Treasure*, pp. 75, 77. See also: Baratte, 'Observations', p. 66. In a fifth-century poem celebrating the beauty of the villa owned by the Pontius family at Burgus, Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, ed. A. Loyen (Paris, 1960), XXII. 142–4, writes that an inscription placed on the main door recorded the names of the founders 'to posterity'. Thus, this villa was carrying the same meaning as the Sevso plate to future generations.

as the building represented. These images interacted with their context and, through this, conveyed messages going beyond their appearance as buildings. Beside the significance of buildings as cues for memories in late antique rhetoric⁵⁷ and the importance of domestic architecture and decoration as a tool for memory,⁵⁸ depictions of buildings can serve as memories, both realistic and symbolic. Church models in apse programmes bear messages, involving the memory of the bishop and the character of the church itself as the founder's gift to God. The depiction of villas on metal objects points towards the acceptance in wealthy circles of the villa theme as a conceptual place, a symbol immortalizing the image of the owner's power and culture to guests as well as to posterity. Thus, while the meaning of late antique architectural depictions resides in the representation of the building as a model, the messages that these images convey ultimately concern the concept of memory. Far from being 'tropes' devoid of importance, building representations carry a broad spectrum of messages to their patron and the beholder and, when examined in their context, may be crucial elements for our understanding of late antique culture.

57 M. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 24–59 (esp. p. 42).

58 B. Bergmann, 'The Roman House as a Memory Theater', *ArtB*, 76.2 (1994): pp. 225–56.

'And the mother did not spare the baby at her breast' or Searching for Meaning in Tecnoctonia and Tecnophagy

Dionysios Stathakopoulos

'All deaths are bad enough but there is none so bad as famine', the wasting away and slow decay brought on by pale hunger – as Homer put it at the beginning of European writing.¹ Images of hunger and starvation abound in texts since Antiquity. They suggest that for populations practising a subsistence economy without the means to control or manipulate natural phenomena, subsistence crises were inherent to the system of production and distribution. Such crises may have been very common, but relatively few of them were acute ones with increased mortality.² Here is Basil of Caesarea (c.330–79) in his homily 'delivered in times of famine and drought':

Hunger is a disease that torments with slowness, a pain that endures, a sickness that lasts, and is hidden in the bowels, a death that is always present and ever-lingering. ... The flesh becomes thin, and remains attached to the bones like a spider-web; the colour is lost entirely The knees no longer support, but shuffle because of the weight. The voice is weak and feeble; the eyes weakened and without their natural support in the cavities, sunken in the sockets like dried nuts in the sun. ... The torment of hunger forces many to cross the limits of nature, that is to feed on the bodies of people related by blood or friendship, and the mothers who give birth to children only to put them back into the womb with horror.³

1 Odys. XII 342, trans. S. Butler (London 1900) 155; the second part of the sentence uses the translation of the same verses by Alexander Pope (London, 1854), p. 208. The authority of this phrase is evident from the way it was taken up by authors throughout Late Antiquity, e.g., Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia dicta tempore famis et siccitatis* 7, PG 31:321; *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*: P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans* (2 vols, Paris, 1979), vol. 2, § 252.

2 For an overview of such phenomena see D.Ch. Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire* (Aldershot, 2004), esp. chs 2 and 3.

3 Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia dicta tempore famis et siccitatis*, PG 31:303D–328C (here 321A–D); trans. P. Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 27; see now the excellent

Around the same time Rome was being plundered by Alaric, the Visigoths entered and captured large parts of Spain. Among the ravages of war and catastrophe an apocalyptic mood was imminent. The Spanish bishop Hydatius (c.400–469) records the events as follows:

As the Barbarians ran wild through Spain and the deadly pestilence continued on its savage course, the wealth and goods stored in the cities were plundered by the tyrannical tax-collector and consumed by the soldiers. A famine ran riot, so dire that driven by hunger human beings devoured human flesh; mothers too feasted upon the bodies of their own children whom they had killed and cooked with their own hands.¹⁰

More than a century later we encounter another case of tecnophagy. It allegedly occurred during a siege-induced famine in Liguria in the winter of 537/38 in the course of Justinian's Gothic Wars. Our source is Datius (died 552), Archbishop of Milan and his account is found in the *Liber Pontificalis*. In a vague manner he states that 'in some parts of the region women ate their own children because of the famine'.¹¹ A much later author, Paul the Deacon (c.720–800) spices it up by specifying that 'mothers consumed parts of their unfortunate offspring'.¹² The same two sources, the *Liber Pontificalis* and Paul retell, more or less, the same story this time concerning the dire famine that broke out during the siege of Rome by Totila in 545/46.¹³ It is interesting that Prokopios (fl. 530s–50s), a contemporary author, who had access to first-hand information of the events, as secretary of the commanding general Belisarius (although it is unsure whether he was in Italy in that period),¹⁴ and who has no difficulty in recording the practice of cannibalism as such,¹⁵ does not mention this fact, although he does describe in the darkest colours the devastation that the famine brought on:

The famine, becoming more severe as time went on, was greatly increasing its ravages driving men to discover monstrous foods unknown to the natural desires of man. ... And if any man had a horse or any other animal which had died, this Roman was counted among those exceedingly fortunate, seeing that he was able to live luxuriously upon the flesh of a dead animal. But all the rest of the numerous inhabitants were eating nettles only, such as grow in abundance

10 R.W. Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana. Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 82–3; Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence*, Nr. 46.

11 *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne (2 vols, Paris, 1886), vol. 1, LX, p. 291.

12 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. H. Droysen (Berlin, 1879), XVI, 18, p. 222; Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence*, Nr. 95.

13 *Liber Pontificalis* LXI 7, p. 298; Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, XVI 22, p. 224; Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence*, Nr. 123.

14 A. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1985), p. 14.

15 Prokopios, *Wars*, eds J. Haury and G. Wirth (7 vols, Leipzig, 1963), vol. 2, III 16, 2–3, p. 363. Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence*, Nr. 122.

about the walls and among the ruins in all parts of the city. ... And now they were even beginning to eat each other's dung. There were many too, who committed suicide because of the pressure of famine; for they could no longer find either dogs or mice or any dead animal of any kind on which to feed.¹⁶

It is important to notice that such incidents of child-eating are also recorded in narratives that are situated outside the Graeco-roman tradition. One of the earliest is found in the work entitled *Riṣ Mellē* (A summary of world history) of the late seventh-century Nestorian monk and author John Bar Penkaye (fl. late seventh century). It concerns the eye-witness account of a period of severe crisis in the region of Mesopotamia, during which famine, epidemics and warfare decimated the population. This text is of a distinct eschatological tone – in accordance with other contemporary, mostly pseudo-epigraphical texts of apocalyptic character (as Pseudo-Methodios) that tried to come to terms with the Arabic invasion and the devastation that accompanied it. All known catastrophes are included in John's register; among them figures prominently infanticide with subsequent cannibalism:

Again the very hands of compassionate mothers have boiled up their children to serve as food. ... Many a mother made her children into food: sometimes in the evening she might be sleeping with her children, but in the morning their lives had been put to a silent end.¹⁷

Summarizing the findings so far we can isolate the following common points: firstly the narrative trait of mothers killing and eating their own children is present throughout Late Antiquity, in Greek, Latin and Syriac texts. Secondly, these cases occur during sieges or general warfare. Thirdly, the authors that have made use of it were in one way or another connected to the Church and thus can be expected to have been familiar with a specific canon of theological texts.

Cannibalism constitutes one of the greatest taboos of human behaviour. When confronted with this sensational phenomenon in both past and present scholars are often at a loss, torn between complete rejection and unconditional acceptance. As is often the case, we can expect to do justice to the phenomenon by adopting a subtler reading that is positioned between these extreme poles. Cannibalism can be generally divided in two major categories: customary (or ritual) and occasional (or survival). The first category includes those cases of eating human flesh that have been postulated in prehistoric and archaic communities as well as those that have been observed and recorded among natural tribes by travellers and subsequently by anthropologists. Popular images

16 Prokopios, *Wars*, III 17, 9–20, pp. 371–2; Procopius, *The wars*, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1942), pp. 297–301; Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence*, Nr 123.

17 John Bar Penkaye, *Riṣ Mellē*: S. Brock, 'North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of John Bar Penkaye's *Riṣ Mellē*', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1989): XV 163 p. 70; Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence*, Nr 194.

of cannibalism have sprung mostly from this category. They have developed an afterlife as myths and have replenished the western collective consciousness up to today. There is a strong scholarly body of work that denies such cases any historicity and an equally strong one that strives to prove the opposite.¹⁸ The actions of certain sociopath individuals, notably serial killers that kill and consume their victims, may also be perceived – in the larger sense – as pertaining to customary or ritual cannibalism. This has also become a prominent trait of mass-culture products, as films and advertisement, but its study should be the object of psychiatry or cultural anthropology rather than history.

The second category, occasional or survival cannibalism, is the only one that is universal, both in time and space, and undeniably historic. It occurs, as a rule, in the face of dire hunger and has been linked with human history from its beginnings up to our day. Hunger-induced cannibalism constitutes an act of transcendence of customary dietary restrictions or taboos as a result of the diminution of the sense of aversion in the midst of famine. According to Sigmund Freud the feeling of hunger is one of the ego-instincts, as opposed to the object-oriented libido. He identified the former type of impulses with the so-called death-instincts, primeval inner forces that lead the individual to destruction, to its return to the inorganic state. He considered these instincts as more primitive than those connected with libido and as such responsible for acts of seemingly blind impetus that can often have catastrophic results for the individual.¹⁹

In a daring essay the ethnopsychiatrist Georges Devereux wrote of the cannibalistic impulses of parents.²⁰ He identified a link between the frequent cases of female animals who have just given birth and eat the afterbirth, often not stopping until they devour some of the young as well and an impulse to do the same in humans, which, however, has been culturally transformed in

18 From the growing body of literature that rejects any historical accounts on cannibalism among primitive societies as fiction: W. Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth* (Oxford, 1979); E. Frank, 'Sie fressen Menschen, wie ihr scheußliches Aussehen beweist ...', in: H.P. Duerr (ed.), *Authentizität und Betrug in der Ethnologie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), pp. 199–224; H. Peter-Röcher, *Mythos Menschenfresser: Ein Blick in die Kochtöpfe der Kannibalen* (Munich, 1998). The opposite tendency is effectively argued for by anthropologists in such books as: L.R. Goldman (ed.), *The Anthropology of Cannibalism* (Westport, London, 1999); P. Brown and D. Tuzin (eds), *The Ethnography of Cannibalism* (Washington, DC, 1983).

19 S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, new trans. J. Strachey (London and New York, 1961; first ed. London 193), pp. 71–5. I am well aware of the criticism that Freud's body of work has received especially since the 1970s (see, for example, the introduction entitled 'The Anti-Freudian Mood' in P. Robinson's, *Freud and his Critics* [Berkeley, 1993], pp. 1–17). Nevertheless I consider his notion of the death-instinct as one of the few attempts to shed light on hunger as a psychological phenomenon, an interpretation that, in my mind, still holds. Even critics that deal with the specific theory of the death-instinct have not in fact been able to procure arguments against its existence and the mechanisms ascribed to it by Freud: K. Reiter, *Der König ist nackt. Eine Kritik an Sigmund Freud* (Vienna, 1996), pp. 129–31.

20 G. Devereux, 'The Cannibalistic Impulses of Parents', in *Basic Problems of Ethnopsychiatry* (Chicago and London, 1980), pp. 122–37 (esp. pp. 125–30).

the form of projection. He does not specify which forms this projection could take, but a distant echo may perhaps be found in that overused phrase so often addressed to small children (and not only by their mothers): ‘you’re so lovely, I could eat you’.

The above theories were, as a rule, formulated without any basis in verifiable contemporary accounts. In fact, browsing through more recent historical records of mothers killing and eating their children I have only managed to find two cases: one during the siege of Messolonghi in the Greek war of Independence in 1826,²¹ and another in the trail of the Donner Party, a group of pioneers who got lost and trapped by bad weather in the mountains of Utah in the winter of 1846/47.²² In both instances, however, the mothers had allegedly consumed their already dead infants. As it seems corroboration of the cases of *tecnoctonia* and *tecnophagy* in Late Antiquity will not come from merely juxtaposing it with modern evidence for such a practice. Does this mean that corroboration cannot be found, because such events never occurred?

A different approach to these cases would be to view them not as fact, but as a literary motif. With their common traits in mind, one can investigate, whether this narrative complex is to be found in other, older, influential texts.

In the vast motif-index compiled by Stith Thompson there is indeed a large number of examples referring to mothers eating their children.²³ The material from which this collection is compiled is fairly recent, but it is possible that they partly represent ancient preoccupations with the subject, re-worked into the form of myths, parables and folk-tales. Perhaps, however, there are more normative texts at play here, ones that have a proven and close relationship to the Christian Greek culture that is the backbone of Byzantine literature.

Two Biblical pericopes fit this role quite well. The first instances are found in Deuteronomy; they are curses against those who disobey the Lord’s commands:

And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee (28:53.30). And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates (28:57.34).

21 A. Mathaiou, ‘Διαιτητικές απαγορεύσεις στην Τουρκοκρατία’, *Ιστορικά* 21 (1994): p. 265 – based on the eye-witness account of Artemios Michos, one of the military commanders of the city: A. Michos, *Απομνημονεύματα της δευτέρας πολιορκίας του Μεσολογγίου (1825-1826) και τινές άλλαι σημειώσεις εις την ιστορίαν του μεγάλου Αγώνος*, ed. S. P. Arabantinos (Athens, 1883), pp. 57–8, n. 2.

22 G.R. Stewart, *Ordeal by Hunger: The Story of the Donner Party* (Boston and New York, 1963 suppl. ed.), pp. 244–5.

23 S. Thompson, *Motif-index of folk literature* (6 vols, Indiana, 1934–55), G61, G72, G72.1, K2116.II, N325.2.

The second passage refers to the siege of Samaria in 2 Kings 6:28–30 in the late ninth century BCE. Here's what a woman tells king Joram:

This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

The passages combine all the elements that are present in the narratives we have discussed: warfare, a state of siege, a severe famine and ultimately the people's resort to cannibalism and especially to the eating of their own children by their mothers. These incidents of infanticide and cannibalism carry powerful metaphorical connotations. Giving life to a child and then taking it away signifies a reversal of the binary couple in and out: a child comes out of the womb and is returned to it through consumption.²⁴ Given the tremendous authority of biblical texts for the mentality and the textual tradition of the Byzantine world, we should not overlook the fact that these passages could have, and probably did function as a model for cannibalism narratives. It provided later authors with a set of authoritative images that were certain to bring up connotations of the biblical archetype to their text and subsequently to their audience.

Another text, however, functioned as a mediator between the Old Testament and Christian authors as attested by its wide use in both Greek and Latin texts throughout the Middle Ages. In a passage of his *Jewish War*, Flavius Josephus (c.37–100) narrates the following story. I quote, omitting certain short passages:

There was a certain woman that dwelt beyond Jordan, her name was Mary; she was eminent for her family and her wealth, and had fled away to Jerusalem with the rest of the multitude, and was with them besieged therein at this time. The other effects of this woman had been already seized upon. What she had treasured up besides, as also what food she had contrived to save, had been also carried off by the rapacious guards, who came every day running into her house for that purpose; and if she found any food, she perceived her labors were for others, and not for herself; and it was now become impossible for her any way to find any more food, while the famine pierced through her very bowels and marrow, when also her passion was fired to a degree beyond the famine itself; nor did she consult with any thing but with her passion and the necessity she was in. She then attempted a most unnatural thing; and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, 'O thou miserable infant! for whom shall I preserve

²⁴ For an excellent study of this binary couple: M. Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: an Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton, 1990); on images of the child returning to the mother's womb, now termed a tomb, see the excellent article by R.J. Macrides, 'Poetic Justice in the Patriarchate. Murder and Cannibalism in the Provinces', in L. Burgmann, M.T. Fögen and A. Schmink (eds), *Cupido Legum* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), pp. 137–68, which touches on a number of similar subjects. I would like to thank the author for sharing her thoughts with me on this topic long after the publication of her work.

He then ... placed them on the roof [of the plane]. ... The hand rose and pushed the meat into his mouth. He swallowed it. ... Zerbino took a strip and swallowed it as Canessa had done, but it stuck into his throat. He scooped a handful of snow into his mouth and managed to wash it down.³³

These are new and harrowing images of cannibalism; their technical details – that is, in our particular context – their breaking free of the Wittgensteinian impasse is what makes them so distressing. But does the fact that late antique authors shied away from doing the same render their narratives unreliable? Does the proved existence of a strong model motif signify that these late antique cases of infanticide and cannibalism are merely fiction? Ultimately this is almost a question of our individual understanding of human nature and what it is or is not capable of doing. We cannot be certain that these late antique mothers killed and ate their own children in times of dire famine. But maybe this particular question is not the most central one. Perhaps it is important to dwell on the supposed antithesis between topos and fact and consider whether these two may not be mutually exclusive. In my opinion people undoubtedly resorted to cannibalism under extreme conditions of famine and starvation. The information trickled down to our authors who made the choice to dramatize it by using a well-known and powerful motif: even the mothers, whose instincts, we would like to believe, would be to sacrifice their own lives for the survival of their children, did the opposite and killed and ate their own offspring. But again this would mean to overlook the psychological and moral breakdown inflicted by starvation. In a state of torpor mothers who took away the bread rations of their children indifferent to the deprivation of their offspring have been observed.³⁴ Perhaps the distance between such behaviour and that of the sources discussed above is less great than we would care to think.

The remoteness between our world and that of Late Antiquity when it comes to hunger and starvation is vast. As Piero Camporesi put it: '... the horror for anthropophagy and patrophagy becomes ever more consistent the more western European society is spared the pangs of hunger'.³⁵

Our search for meaning has expectedly shown how elusive and fleeting both the quest and its object can be. Already the fact of putting together cases whose supposed similarities make them susceptible to a joint analysis is telling: as Foucault has shown this quest for a typological investigation probably reveals more about us than the past.³⁶ The above cases looked from across the

33 P.P. Read, *Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors* (New York, 1974), pp. 78–9.

34 Skouras et al., *Ψυχοπαθολογία*, p. 348.

35 Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams*, p. 53.

36 'The Birth of a World', interview with M. Foucault (first published in *Le Monde des Livres*, 3 May 1969), in: S. Lotringer (ed.), *Foucault Live, Collected Interviews, 1961–1984* (New York, 1989), pp. 65–7. The main books by Foucault alluded to are *The Order of Things* (London, 1970) and the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, 1972).

millennial gap that separates us from them could make us ask: if you are what you eat, what are you if you eat your children? We are regarding people as they are coping with distressing events and trying to report them accurately, one hopes, but at the same time feeling the burden of genre. Humans cannot escape their own context, mostly because there are limits as to how much of it they can consciously apprehend. The above can be read as an exercise in making such limitations visible.

The Anxiety of Images: Meanings and Material Objects

Averil Cameron

Leslie Brubaker is one of the most powerful of the contextual art historians to whom historians of Byzantium have been deeply indebted since the 1980s. Her doctoral thesis, written under the supervision of Herbert Kessler, and published as an important book in 1999,¹ had been completed in 1983 and from the later 1980s onwards her work demonstrated the debt to contextual approaches which she has herself identified as influencing Byzantine art history.² Not only context, but also perception, 'ways of seeing', the relation between word and image, and reception are central to her work, and nowhere more so than in her subtle and complex expositions of Byzantine cultural production in the ninth century.³ Cultural history, or cultural studies, is the realm within which many late antique and some Byzantine historians who make explicit use of critical theory now place themselves, and Brubaker has herself seemed to be moving in this direction, especially in her direct confrontation of the problems surrounding the topics of material culture and gender.⁴ Yet the uncompromising emphasis which she places on material culture – objects as objects – in her book co-authored with John Haldon on the sources for Byzantium in the iconoclast era (not, we are to understand,

1 L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999).

2 L. Brubaker, 'Critical approaches to art history, in E. Jeffreys, with J. Haldon and R. Cormack (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 59–66 (at p. 62).

3 L. Brubaker (ed.), *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Aldershot, 1998); *eadem* (ed.), 'Byzantine art in the ninth century: theory, practice, and culture', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 13 (1989): pp. 23–93; *eadem*, 'Perception and conception: art, theory and culture in ninth-century Byzantium', *Word and Image* 5.1 (1989): pp. 19–32.

4 L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850): The Sources* (Aldershot, 2001), which is divided into two parts, entitled 'Material Culture' and 'the Written Sources'; *idem*, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850)* (Cambridge: 2010). For gender see L. Brubaker and J. Smith (eds), *Gender in Society, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2004).

the sources for 'Iconoclasm', in the usual rather loose terminology) seems at first sight to stand in a relationship of tension with her equally magisterial insistence on the need for exegesis when dealing with Byzantine art, an art which cannot, after all, simply be allowed to speak for itself. At least, that is true for a high percentage of the religious art of Byzantium, which is replete with meanings and messages drawn from a complex and sometimes contested body of doctrine and belief – and the religious art of Byzantium itself occupies an extremely prominent place within the surviving body of Byzantine visual art. This contribution, written by a historian who has had good reason to learn from Brubaker's work, asks whether such a tension is inevitable, and how the two ways of looking can coexist.⁵

As always, there is the problem of which words to use. 'Material culture' is a term which excludes; it suggests objects without their meanings, though of course we know from anthropology that all objects are invested with meaning. To include icons in the category of material culture, that is, the very kind of religious objects whose meanings were to be so contested, seems to represent a deliberate choice to demythologize them, indeed to make them into 'sources', almost as if they are being assigned to the status of the building blocks of positivist history. This should admittedly be qualified by noting that the phrase 'the Iconoclast era' in the book's title sets its chronological starting point firmly at AD 680, and that the section on icons is strictly limited to images or textual references assigned by the author to that period, without attempting to give a general survey of material other scholars might have wanted to include. Nevertheless the strictness of approach, and its presentation of icons as 'sources', seems to stand apart from the general tendency of Brubaker's work, and therefore to be all the more interesting and worth exploring.

We find Brubaker on several occasions opposing the conventional view of a 'rise of icons' in the late sixth century⁶ and promoting the idea that they became important, that is, acquired a special status, only substantially later. This statement needs finessing: 'relic-icons' of Christ do 'appear in the third quarter of the sixth century', but miraculous icons of the Virgin 'come into play only in the tenth century'.⁷ The term 'icon' in the phrase 'rise of icons' also needs

5 The bibliography on icons and iconoclasm is literally vast and constantly growing; I can aim here only to give pointers.

6 The classic expression of the conventional view is that by E. Kitzinger, 'The cult of images in the age before Iconoclasm', *DOP* 8 (1954): pp. 83–150, incorporating what Brubaker calls 'the Kitzinger model'.

7 L. Brubaker and M. Cunningham, 'Byzantine veneration of the *Theotokos*: icons, relics and eighth-century homilies', in H. Amirav and B. ter Haar Romeny (eds), *From Rome to Constantinople. Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron* (Leuven, Paris and Dudley, Massachusetts, 2007), pp. 235–50 (at p. 250), citing B.V. Pencheva, 'The supernatural protector of Constantinople: the Virgin and her icons in the tradition of the Avar siege', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 26 (2002): pp. 2–41, and *eadem*, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 2006). Brubaker has revisited the formulation in

to be unpacked: which icons are intended, those of Christ, or the Virgin, or images of the saints, and what kinds of image? What makes an image an icon – seemingly, for Brubaker, when it is associated with a cult, or when it is believed to perform miracles?⁸ Further, the term ‘relic-icons’ alludes to a complementary position, namely that relics preceded icons in attracting religious importance: as Brubaker put it in an earlier and classic paper, ‘the holy portrait became transparent – a window through which one could reach the saint depicted – in the last quarter of the seventh century, and especially in the last two decades of that century’, while ‘even then’ not replacing ‘visions, visitations and relics’.⁹ The argument relies significantly on the assumption that references to apparent cult images in pre-late seventh-century texts are in fact interpolated: ‘though in some cases the jury is still out, many of the basic accounts upon which the Kitzinger model rests are now generally accepted as later interpolations into earlier texts’.¹⁰ For her, such references include those in the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschos and the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, as well as the *Miracles of Artemius* from the seventh century.¹¹ We have certainly come in recent years to recognize the extraordinary extent of textual manipulation that went on during the Iconoclast period in order to manufacture appropriate evidence for the iconophile case, but a word of caution is perhaps in order when we see that Brubaker herself recognizes the extreme paucity of the evidence. Furthermore, while she is undoubtedly right to call into question the Kitzinger model of a seamless ‘rise’ in the attention given to religious images from about AD 550, which culminated in the excesses to which the iconoclasts objected, the sheer complexities of the textual evidence, and the extent of later revision, which could (though it did not always) include actual interpolation, mean that alternative generalizations are also difficult and that every individual example has to be taken on its own terms. The Brubaker model, if we may call it that, is equally linear, in that relics (which for her include *acheiropoietai* images of Christ) precede icons, with the consequence that if the latter only develop their cult status in the late seventh century, a different narrative of Iconoclasm will be needed.¹² It is also a model that relies on a very specific understanding of

her Introduction to R. Ousterhout and L. Brubaker (eds), *The Sacred Image. East and West* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 1–24. An icon of Christ was indeed processed on the walls, even if not one of the Virgin, as often stated; for a succinct analysis see C. Mango, ‘Constantinople as Theotokoupolis’, in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens and Milan, 2000), pp. 17–25 (at pp. 21–2).

8 L. Brubaker, ‘Icons before Iconoclasm’, in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo, XLV Settimane internazionale di studi sull’alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 1998), pp. 1215–54 (at p. 1218).

9 Ibid., p. 1251.

10 Ibid., pp. 1219, 1224.

11 Ibid., p. 1239 (‘heavily interpolated’).

12 The Brubaker view is described as ‘rather radical’ by G. Wolf, ‘Icons and sites’, in Maria Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 23–49 (at p. 26).

The main themes of this volume are the identification of 'visions', 'messages', and 'meanings' in various facets of Byzantine culture and the possible differences in the perception of these visions, messages and meanings as seen by their original audience and by modern scholars. The volume addresses the methodological question of how far interpretations should go – whether there is a tendency to read too much into too little or whether not enough attention is paid to apparent minutiae that may have been important in their historical context. As the essays span a wide chronological era, they also present a means of assessing the relative degrees of continuity and change in Byzantine visions, messages and meanings over time.

Thus, as highlighted in the concluding section, the book discusses the validity of existing notions regarding the fluidity of Byzantine culture: when continuity was a matter of a rigid adherence to traditional values and when a manifestation of the ability to adapt old conventions to new circumstances, and it shows that in some respects, Byzantine cultural history may have been less fragmented than is usually assumed. Similarly, by reflecting not just on new interpretations, but also on the process of interpreting itself, the contributors demonstrate how research within Byzantine studies has evolved over the past thirty years from a set of narrowly defined individual disciplines into a broader exploration of interconnected cultural phenomena.

*Cover illustration: Mary Magdalene and angel, detail of the *Noli me Tangere* icon. © Trustees of the British Museum.*

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